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The Cuban Revolution: Reform and Reaction

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BY CHARLES A. THOMSON

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THE REVOLT OF THE SERGEANTS

THE revolution of September 4, 1933 was a unique event, not alone in the history of Cuba, but possibly in that of all Latin America. In a successful barracks revolt, which cost not a single casualty, the rank and file of the army, led by a group of sergeants, ousted the entire group of commissioned officers. This movement overthrew the Céspedes government and set up another headed by a Pentarchy, or Executive Commission of five members.

On the nights of September 3 and 4 the sergeants secured permission to meet at Camp Columbia for consideration of a proposed reduction in pay and a new order restricting their promotion. Discussion at the first meeting resulted in an agreement that the officers should be removed from power until these questions were settled. On the following night a group of student leaders, hearing rumors of the insurrection, arrived at Camp Columbia before 10 p.m. to find Fulgencio Batista, a sergeant-stenographer, acting as head of the movement. It is apparently doubtful that the chiefs of this revolt had foreseen that their coup might involve a change in the civil government. Some of the first members of the Student Directorate to arrive at Camp Columbia report finding the sergeants were still undecided on this point.¹ These civilians were soon joined by other members of the Directorate, together with a few professors and intellectual leaders who specially enjoyed their confidence. The students finally persuaded Batista and the other sergeants to accept as the political platform of their movement the program for a provisional government promulgated by the University Student Directorate on August 22. With the support of the sergeants, the Student Directorate proceeded to name five members of an Executive Commission to serve as heads of the new government. The fol-

1. Statement to the Foreign Policy Association by Carlos Prío Socarrás.

lowing four were unanimously nominated: Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín and Dr. Guillermo Portela, professors in the University; Sergio Carbó, a journalist; and Dr. J. M. Irisarri, a leading lawyer and intellectual, the author in part of the student program. Batista was at first suggested for the fifth member but he declined, and the choice finally fell on Porfirio Franca, a retired banker, whose standing in financial and commercial circles, it was hoped, might strengthen the new régime with conservatives.²

The coup of September 4 was received with amazement in both Cuba and the United States. The army, the bulwark of law and order, had fallen into the hands of an unknown group of sergeants. The civil government was controlled by a group of "revolutionary" intellectuals, backed principally by university students. An adventitious feature, "the government of five Presidents," intensified the general bewilderment and concern.³ Labor unrest and Communist agitation, which had spread widely throughout the interior under the Céspedes régime, threatened a devastating social revolution. The various political factions adopted differing attitudes toward the new government: some were friendly, some hostile, some "expectant."⁴ The United States was unfriendly and warships were being rushed to Cuban waters.

The army provided the most urgent problem

2. The above is based on first-hand accounts, published in issues of *Bohemia*, as follows: Dr. J. M. Irisarri, August 26, 1934; Rubén de León, February 4, 1934; Juan Antonio Rubio y Padilla, September 30, 1934; also statement of Carlos Prío Socarrás, cited. For the resolution announcing the establishment of the Pentarchy, cf. *Gaceta*, September 5, 1933, *Edición Extraordinaria No. 26*. Dr. Céspedes did not present his resignation to the Pentarchy, but finally offered that document to Colonel Mendieta on January 18, 1934, just before the latter took the oath of office as Provisional President.

3. Popular humor baptized the individual members of the Pentarchy with the phrase, "one-fifth of a President."

4. The attitude of these groups, however, crystallized when it became known that Ambassador Welles was opposed to the régime and its recognition was unlikely.

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for the Pentarchy. The sergeant leaders of the revolt at first announced that they would return control to the commissioned officers as soon as the new government was consolidated. Batista declared: "There will be no promotions, nor any increases in pay, as a result of this movement . . . I would resign rather than accept any promotion."⁵ The officers were summoned to the Presidential Palace and invited to name five of their number who, together with Sergeant Batista, would form a Military Junta. The offer, however, was rejected; the officers refused to recognize in any way the validity of the September 4 revolution, which to them signified complete subversion of army discipline. On September 7 Sergio Carbó, acting independently of other members of the Pentarchy, signed a decree making Batista a colonel and chief of staff.

On September 8 the ousted army officers, who numbered approximately 500, began gathering at the National Hotel, an 8-story steel and concrete structure situated on a hill overlooking the *Malecón*, Havana's ocean shore drive. That evening the enlisted men stationed machine guns around the hotel and attempted to search it, but the arrival of Ambassador Welles, who was then making his residence there, led to the retirement of the soldiers, and the officers remained in the hostelry.⁶

Meanwhile, members of the government were conferring with representatives of various factions—Nationalists, *Menocalistas*, *Marianistas*, the ABC and OCRR—in an endeavor to secure their cooperation. When these negotiations failed, it was announced on September 9 that the Pentarchy would resign, and on the following day Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín became the new Provisional President.

The attitude of the United States was an important factor in the fall of the government of five. Although the coup had been bloodless and order was maintained both in Havana and the interior,⁷ serious alarm was expressed by officials in touch with Ambassador Welles. Amid haste and confusion a sweeping precautionary program was initiated by the United States. The entire Atlantic fleet was marshaled for quick action, 30 naval vessels were rushed toward Cuban waters, a thousand marines were concentrated at Quantico, and it was

announced that Secretary Swanson was en route to Havana. These measures, which—according to the State Department—were designed solely to protect the 5,500 Americans resident in Cuba, provoked strong resentment in Cuban government circles and widespread concern throughout Latin America.

In an attempt to allay these apprehensions, President Roosevelt induced Secretary Swanson not to land at Havana but to proceed to Panama in accord with the original plans for his trip. The White House also hastened to declare that the United States did not want armed intervention in Cuba. Washington's chief concern was for the protection of American citizens and the prevention of anarchy. On September 6 President Roosevelt called to the White House the diplomatic representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico, informed them of his desire to share with them full information on the Cuban situation, and assured them that his government was seeking by all possible means to avoid intervention. This step, which recognized the interest of other American countries in the Cuban situation, had a distinctly favorable effect on Latin American opinion. A note of September 8 from Argentina to Washington, however, expressed the hope that intervention in Cuba would be avoided under all circumstances and urged the granting of full self-determination to "youthful nations" as the "only method which will assure on this continent the stability of political institutions."⁸

THE GRAU REGIME

On September 10, 1933, Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín became Provisional President. The new executive pledged himself "before the people of Cuba, in whose hands the sovereignty of the nation rests, to carry out the entire revolutionary program," at the same time promising respect for all interests in the island and regard for cordial relations with foreign nations.⁹ Dr. Grau, a distinguished physician and a professor in the National University, had been a prominent opponent of the Machado dictatorship, but before becoming a member of the Executive Commission had never participated actively in politics.

The new régime, which found its chief support in the surging nationalist enthusiasm aroused by the accession of the Pentarchy, faced a difficult problem in charting its future course. While it

5. *New York Herald Tribune*, September 7, 1933.

6. *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*, September 9, 1933.

7. A week later, after a careful investigation, Admiral Freeman, chief of the American naval forces declared: "There is no place in Cuba where conditions are not normal. We have found everywhere the same situation as here in Havana. Everywhere there is peace and tranquillity." *Diario de la Marina*, September 13, 1933, and *Havana Evening Telegram*, September 12, 1933.

8. U. S. State Department, *Press Releases*, September 9, 1933, p. 148.

9. *New York Times*, September 11, 1933.

could not for one moment forget the preponderant influence of the United States, it could by no means ignore the angry rumblings of discontent among the island's masses, reduced by the depression and the Machado tyranny to unprecedented depths of hunger and misery.¹⁰

Not only the varying pressure of circumstances, but inner conflicts made the government's course a shifting one. While Secretary of the Interior Guiteras demanded radical social reform, Batista and the army—which had carried through its revolution—desired a conservative program, which might bring United States recognition and a period of tranquillity favorable to the consolidation of the military's new position. President Grau stood between these two tendencies.¹¹ Throughout his rule, nationalist sentiment rather than radical doctrines dominated the consideration of economic questions. The government was pro-labor and anti-capital to a considerable degree because, in Cuba as in Mexico, capital is predominantly foreign.

On September 14 the Grau government promulgated statutes under which Cuba would be provisionally governed.¹² These pledged the maintenance of "absolute national independence and sovereignty," respect for all treaties, and the prompt calling of a constitutional convention, elections for which were subsequently set for April 1, 1934. Meanwhile, the administration would have power "temporarily to submit individual rights to a régime of governmental fiscalization" or control, a phrase which was interpreted as implying dictatorial powers. "Tribunals of sanctions" were to be set up to judge former *Machadistas* and political offenders.

The government's difficulties were complicated by the political inexperience of President Grau and that of his cabinet. Public order was threatened by the anomalous position of the army, whose commissioned officers were in open revolt against the main body. Politically the régime could not claim

to represent even a majority of revolutionary factions. It was opposed by the ABC and the OCRR secret societies, as well as by such parties as Mendieta's Nationalists and Menocal's Conservatives, all of which, except the last named, had been represented in the ill-fated Céspedes cabinet. Moreover, it was attacked from one side by business and commercial interests, and from the other by left-wing labor and Communist groups. Its principal civilian support came from the University Student Directorate.¹³

The first weeks of the new government were a time of bewilderment, confusion, wild rumors, continuous political negotiations in the capital, and widespread unrest throughout the interior. Government in the provinces had degenerated to large degree into a mass of conflicting local autonomies. Havana appointees often were not recognized and at times forcibly prevented from exercising jurisdiction.

On September 15, under the auspices of the Havana Rotary Club, negotiations were opened between the government and the Opposition, looking toward the possible formation of a coalition régime.¹⁴ The Opposition delegates demanded that Dr. Grau place his resignation in the hands of a Junta including all the anti-Machado factions.¹⁵ The students regarded Dr. Grau as a symbol of the nationalist program to which they were committed; they opposed sharing power in a coalition government with the old-school politicians, fearing that such a step would lead to sabotaging of their revolutionary aims.¹⁶

The lack of United States recognition complicated the problems facing the government. Immediately following the inauguration of President Grau, Havana dispatches reported the "official American viewpoint" as prescribing four conditions which the new régime must fulfill in order

10. For an account of existing unrest and the dramatic strike movement, cf. Commission on Cuban Affairs, *Problems of the New Cuba* (New York, Foreign Policy Association, 1935), chapter VIII.

11. In a radio broadcast to the American people, he said of his régime: "We are called rebels because we wish to give our countrymen a safe and secure feeling of freedom and self-determination: we are called radicals because we are closely following in the tracks of your own National Recovery Act: we are called Communists because we endeavor to return the buying power of the Cuban people." *New York Times*, October 8, 1933.

12. *Gaceta*, September 14, 1933, *Edición Extraordinaria No. 30*. Although these statutes did not specifically abrogate the 1901 constitution, the Supreme Court ruled during the Mendieta régime that in fact they, together with other acts of the Grau government, modified the former constitution. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1934, Sentence No. 2 of March 1, 1934.

13. For its program, cf. "Directorio Estudiantil Universitario al pueblo de Cuba," *Diario de la Marina*, August 24, 1933.

14. Cf. *Diario de la Marina*, September 16, 1933.

15. The ABC had published a manifesto on September 10, "El ABC ante la Crisis Cubana," cited, in which they declared their opposition to the Grau régime on two grounds: (1) it was a minority government, and (2) it owed its origin to the sergeants' revolt. This movement, they held, contained the seeds of militarism and created a precedent disastrous for future political peace in Cuba. The original opposition of the ABC was intensified in the course of the Grau régime by support the society enlisted from many Spaniards—shopkeepers and others—who were strongly antagonistic to the Grau policies.

16. For various formulas outlining possible solutions of the political problem, cf. *New York Herald Tribune*, September 20, 1933; *Havana American News*, September 26, 1933; and letter of Dr. Fernando Ortiz, *Diario de la Marina*, November 1, 1933. During the last part of the Grau period, Dr. Benjamín Fernández de Medina, Minister of Uruguay to Cuba, took a prominent part in conciliation endeavors.

to win recognition: it would be required to show capacity to govern, maintain order, receive distinct popular support and comply with all its obligations. These conditions were based, it was alleged, on the responsibility of the United States under the Platt Amendment to assure the maintenance of a government "adequate for the protection of life, property and individual liberty."¹⁷ Since recognition by Washington was considered almost a *sine qua non* for the continued existence of any Caribbean government, such a policy practically condemned the Grau régime to struggle within a vicious circle. For without recognition it could not fulfill the conditions of recognition. The hostility of Washington encouraged Opposition elements and the rebellious army officers,¹⁸ thus increasing the government's difficulties in demonstrating its capacity to maintain order and consolidate its political position.

Refusal of United States recognition, together with the presence of the cordon of war vessels around the island, had the paradoxical effect of strengthening the government by arousing a wave of anti-American feeling. In an effort to allay this sentiment and refute the charge that the United States was insisting on the organization of a pro-American régime, Secretary Hull issued a statement on September 11 in which he asserted that Washington was willing to let Cuba solve its own political problems. He declared that the administration was "prepared to welcome any government representing the will of the people of the Republic and capable of maintaining law and order throughout the island."¹⁹

Relations between the government and Mr. Welles were apparently improved by a conference which the Ambassador held with the Student Directorate on September 15. He was reported to have assured the students that a Cuban government would not be barred from recognition, either because of its revolutionary origin or its radical program. He further denied any hostile bias to the Grau régime.²⁰ On September 20 Secretary

Hull clarified Washington's future course of action by declaring that in case of danger Americans would be asked to come to port towns for protection under the shelter of United States warships, thus intimating that a policy of evacuation rather than intervention would be followed. Five days later he announced that landing parties would be used only for the protection of lives, not of property.²¹

Desire for United States recognition was in part responsible, it is alleged, for an offensive against Communists and other radicals in the labor movement which the government initiated late in September. On September 29 a demonstration in Havana honoring the ashes of Julio Antonio Mella—youthful Communist leader assassinated in Mexico by Machado agents—led to a clash with the army in which six were killed and 27 wounded. The headquarters of the Communist-led National Confederation of Labor and the Anti-Imperialist League were raided, and furniture and literature piled in the street and burned.

The government's offensive against its opponents on the left was soon matched by a decisive victory against the former army officers who had taken refuge in the National Hotel.²² On October 2 at 6 a.m. the army opened fire on the hotel. The bombardment continued—save for a 3-hour armistice to permit the evacuation of foreigners—until four in the afternoon, when the officers ran up a white flag. While they were being marched from the hotel in some confusion, an unexpected shot precipitated panic among the soldiers; bullets flew again, resulting in the slaughter of 10 persons, almost all of them officers. One American was killed by a stray shot during the battle, and damage to the hotel was placed at \$100,000. The failure of the United States to land marines, even in the case of open conflict, evidenced Washington's determination to avoid intervention.²³

barking of American marines." *New York Herald Tribune*, September 12, 1933. On September 17 Welles held a private conference with President Grau in the residence of Sra. Dolores Machín de Uppman. *Diario de la Marina*, September 18, 1933. It is reported that at this meeting the Ambassador agreed to recommend recognition of the Grau régime if it could secure the support of any single important Opposition faction. Grau at once sought the cooperation of the *Unión Nacionalista* but its leader, Colonel Mendieta, refused assistance on the ground that the Opposition groups had bound themselves to take only joint action.

21. *New York Herald Tribune*, September 21, 1933; *New York Times*, September 26, 1933.

22. Cf. p. 263.

23. For first-hand accounts of this struggle, cf. Torres Menier, "Mi Diario, La toma del Hotel Nacional," *Bohemia*, March 4, 1934; also "Los trágicos acontecimientos del Hotel Nacional," and "La tregua de una hora fué llevada por la Cruz Roja," *Bohemia*, October 15, 1933.

17. *New York Times*, September 11, 1933.

18. On the day of his inauguration, Grau was informed by Colonel Horacio Ferrer, representing the former officers, that they would never serve under a chief executive who lacked Washington recognition. Ferrer was reported to have suggested that United States marines might be invited to land, to protect the re-establishment in the National Hotel of the Céspedes government. *New York Herald Tribune*, September 11, 1933.

19. State Department, *Press Releases*, September 16, 1933, p. 152.

20. *New York Times*, September 17, 1933. On September 12 the University Directorate had addressed cablegrams to New York and other cities declaring: "American Ambassador has brought together in the National Hotel 300 ex-officers, traitors, to instigate them to overthrow order and to provoke disem-

On November 8 the Grau-Batista régime was faced by another armed threat. Rebel forces, backed by the ABC and recruited from the army, police and civilians, seized Atarés Fortress, various police stations and other strongholds in Havana.²⁴ The movement was crushed after a 2-day battle, inept leadership being a primary factor in the defeat of the rebels. The repression of the revolt further fortified the position of the Grau government and strengthened particularly the influence of Batista and the military.

THE GOVERNMENT'S NATIONALIST PROGRAM

The Grau régime termed itself the representative of the authentic revolutionary impulses of the Cuban people, and because of this claim its supporters came to be known as *auténticos*. Its motto was "Cuba for the Cubans," and a spirit of frank and aggressive nationalism dominated its activities and policies. The régime took early action to eliminate Machado influences from political and governmental organization, and named commissions to "purge" public offices. On September 19 the Grau cabinet approved a decree dissolving all old political parties, since the former dictatorship had captured the organization of these groups.²⁵ On October 6 the National University was conceded complete autonomy from governmental control.²⁶

The mounting wave of strikes and the social unrest rife among the masses were primary factors in shaping the government's program. While frequently resorting to repression, the authorities sought through social and labor legislation to remedy the conditions responsible for the discontent. On September 19 Grau signed a decree establishing a maximum working day of 8 hours. On January 9, 1934 the government fixed a minimum wage for the 1934 sugar crop of 50 cents for cutting, gathering and hauling each 100 *arrobas* of cane.²⁷ This meant, at the official estimate, a daily wage of 75 cents in contrast to less than 20 cents received in 1933. A decree on Labor Organization of November 7, 1933 sought to Cubanize the labor movement and restrict Communist influence by limiting the rôle of foreign leaders. It required that all union officials be Cuban citizens, and all labor organizations were ordered to register in the

Department of Labor; those failing to do so faced the penalty of dissolution. Strikes were prohibited unless demands had previously been submitted to government arbitral boards, whose decisions were compulsory in character.

On the following day, November 8, President Grau signed the decree on Nationalization of Labor, popularly known as the "50 per cent Law." This required all industrial, commercial and agricultural enterprises to employ native Cubans for at least half their total working force (excepting only managers and technicians who could not be replaced), and to pay half the total payroll to Cubans. These last two laws served to mobilize nationalism in the struggle against communism and proved markedly effective in checking the radical drive.²⁸

By the 50-per-cent law the government attracted the support of the Negro and unemployed masses. But this measure served also to excite the active opposition of the 600,000 Spaniards in Cuba. Spanish antagonism was further stirred by a Grau decree which obliged the large mutual benefit societies to employ in their hospitals and clinics only members of the National Medical College.²⁹ On December 21, 1933 it was reported that the Spanish government was considering an appeal to the United States to intervene under the Platt Amendment for the protection of Spanish life and property. Washington lost no time, however, in indicating unofficially that such a request would be refused.³⁰

Although United States interests had been active in opposing practically all the labor legislation of the Grau régime, American hostility was particularly aroused by action affecting three large corporations: the Chase National Bank, the Cuban-American Sugar Company, and the Cuban Electric Company, a subsidiary of the Electric Bond and Share Company. The Chase National Bank had provided \$80,000,000 to the Machado régime for financing a public works program which included the construction of a costly central highway for the island and an elaborate Capitol building in Havana. These loans had become extremely unpopular in Cuba, not only because of the close association of the Chase Bank with the dictator, but because of certain questionable practices connected

24. For the participation of the ABC, cf. "Un Manifiesto del ABC," whose substance was published in *Diario de la Marina*, November 18, 1933. For an account of the conspiracy in the aviation corps, cf. Gilberto Romero Fernández, "Un Alistado de Aviación desmiente al. Cap. Martull," *Bohemia*, March 4, 1934.

25. *Gaceta*, September 20, 1933, Decree No. 1683.

26. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1933, Decree No. 2059.

27. An *arroba* represents 25 pounds.

28. For a more detailed study of Grau's social and labor legislation, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, chapter IX.

29. For a discussion of the Spanish colony and the mutual benefit societies, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 36-41, 116-23.

30. *New York Herald Tribune*, December 22, 1933. Spain had recognized the Grau government on October 12, following similar action by Uruguay, Panama and Peru. Belgium and Sweden also extended recognition.

with their negotiation.³¹ In response to this popular feeling the Grau government, when it came to power, promptly suspended deposits of public works revenues with the Chase Bank, giving no reasons for the act. A later decree of January 12, 1934 ordered cessation of all payments on the public works debt.

The Delicias and Chaparra sugar mills in Oriente province, the \$10,000,000-property of the Cuban-American Sugar Company, were seized by government authorities on December 20, 1933. The mills had been shut down because of labor troubles, but it was hoped that governmental action might avoid continuance of a stoppage which would mean increased poverty and possible lawlessness among the surrounding population.³²

The Cuban Electric Company clashed with the Grau government on two fronts: a dispute on rates, and a labor conflict which led to the temporary seizure of its properties. Its rates in Havana for the individual consumer were 15 cents per kilowatt, a figure approximately twice that currently charged in the larger cities of the United States. After the accession of President Grau, the company offered to make a flat 20 per cent reduction in all rates for residential and commercial service. But this concession proved insufficient, and on December 6 the President issued a decree lowering provisionally by approximately 45 per cent the maximum rates for gas and electricity established in 1902. Despite strong protests from the company, the new rates went into effect on February 8, 1934.

Meanwhile, the corporation had become engaged in a long-drawn-out conflict with its employees. Following the company's refusal to accept certain demands,³³ the workers went on strike on January 13, 1934. The movement paralyzed the activities of the capital, which was left without light, power or street-car service. Its water supply, pumped by electricity, was also endangered. On the following day the government issued Decree No. 172, which authorized "provisional intervention" on the part of the authorities in the administration of the company. The strikers at once returned to work, and for three weeks the concern was under government management.³⁴

31. For a history of the loan and a detailed statement of these charges, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, pp. 381-92.

32. On January 29, under the Mendieta administration, the mills were returned to the owners. *Gaceta*, January 31, 1934, Decree No. 283.

33. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, p. 407. For a detailed history of the strike and a discussion of the public utilities question in Cuba, cf. *ibid.*

34. Following the accession of President Mendieta, the conciliation efforts of a government commission led the company to grant the workers much of what it had previously refused.

During the Grau period, government revenues were at a low figure, due to various fiscal amnesties which had previously been decreed, to payments of advance taxes secured by preceding governments from petroleum companies, as well as to the opposition of conservative economic interests. None the less, service was maintained on all of the island's external obligations—except the Chase loan—without recourse to a moratorium, such as was later declared by the Mendieta government.

GRAU LOSES SUPPORT

Following the crushing of the Atarés revolt on November 9, the Grau-Batista régime stood probably at the peak of its strength. Its success against that insurrection challenged anew the expediency of Washington's non-recognition policy. This policy had been widely attacked in the United States, and its wisdom was questioned by important figures in the Washington administration. Ambassador Welles consequently returned to the United States for a conference with President Roosevelt on November 19 at Warm Springs, Georgia. Following that meeting, the President issued a statement on November 23 declaring that the United States felt "neither partiality for nor prejudice against any faction or individual in Cuba." United States recognition of a government in Cuba afforded "in more than ordinary measure both material and moral support to that government," due to the historically close relationship and the treaty ties existing between the two countries. Washington consequently held that it would not be "a policy of friendship and justice to the Cuban people as a whole to accord recognition to any provisional government in Cuba unless such government clearly possessed the support and approval of the people of that Republic." Although the statement represented a decisive victory for the Cuban policies advocated by Mr. Welles, it was announced that following a brief return visit to Cuba he would be recalled to Washington to resume his position as Assistant Secretary of State and would be replaced by Mr. Jefferson Caffery.³⁵

By this time Mr. Welles had become completely *persona non grata* to the Cuban government. On November 15 President Grau had addressed a personal letter to President Roosevelt, in which he requested the recall of the envoy. After reviewing the success of the government in quelling the Atarés revolt, he declared:

35. For full text of the statement, cf. State Department, *Press Releases*, November 25, 1933, pp. 294, 295. Mr. Welles left Cuba on December 13; five days later Mr. Caffery arrived.

"I am led to request in my own name, as well as in that of my government, that you kindly put an end to the perturbing action of Ambassador Sumner Welles, for the maintenance of the high regard and traditional friendship which exists between our respective countries.

"He has repeatedly disclosed his partiality by holding communication and dealings with the enemies of the Government, and very particularly with those implicated in the uprising which we have just put down with energy mingled with generosity.

"We shall welcome in Cuba any representative of your Excellency imbued with the good neighbor policy which you have outlined with the hearty approval of all the American nations."

Throughout the Grau régime Mr. Welles had firmly resisted strong pressure for intervention on the part of business groups—American, Spanish and Cuban—as well as from other conservative interests. But ill-will prevailed against him in government circles, founded not only on the policy of non-recognition, for which he was held chiefly responsible, and the continued presence of United States war vessels in Cuban waters, but also on his attitude and activities with relation to internal political questions. In the first place, he was believed to be personally hostile to President Grau, to members of the Student Directorate and to other individuals in the government. This hostility contrasted sharply with his high admiration for various leaders in the ABC Opposition group.³⁶ In the second place, his residence for several days in the National Hotel, after the ousted army officers had begun to gather there, had handicapped the government in taking aggressive action against this center of counter-revolution and led to numerous charges, including some from officers in the hotel, that the Ambassador had encouraged the rebellion.³⁷ Third, repeated visits to the Embassy by leading Opposition figures for conference with Mr. Welles accentuated the government's resentment

and fostered suspicions that he was actively meddling in island politics.

But while foreign opposition was undeniably a factor of first importance in undermining the strength of the Grau government, the régime was forced to wage a constant battle against the antagonism of Cuban groups. Its domestic opponents resorted to a campaign of bombing, roof sniping and terrorism. In addition, tax dodging was encouraged among the wealthy, and strikes among labor. As the autumn wore on, business men were increasingly apprehensive about the sugar grinding season, scheduled to begin in January. Many companies announced that, owing to excessive labor demands and unrest, their mills would be unable to operate. Growing tension between blacks and whites—the former strongly pro-Grau, the latter often anti-government—appeared to threaten racial conflict.

The government suffered, moreover, from progressive attrition among its supporters. As early as October 19 the *A.B.C. Radical*,³⁸ whose leader had been a member of the Revolutionary Junta of Camp Columbia, issued a manifesto bitterly criticizing the Grau administration, charging that it had failed to establish peace, order, justice and liberty. On October 30 a temporary vote of confidence in the Student Directorate was secured from a large university assembly only after hours of wrangling. On November 6 the Directorate—feeling that its mandate had expired—declared itself dissolved, announcing, however, that its members would continue to support President Grau as individuals.³⁹ On January 6 an assembly of University students, angered at apparent predominance of military influence in the government, voted definite opposition to the Grau administration.⁴⁰

The lack of discipline prevailing in the army during the first two months of the administration and the arbitrary acts of numerous officers had seriously embarrassed the government. In many cases army leaders, acting solely under the orders of Colonel Batista, appointed local civil officials in the provinces with complete disregard of the Secretary of the Interior, who normally held jurisdiction over such posts.⁴¹ In other cases the efforts of the Min-

36. Cf. *El A.B.C. en la Mediación, Compilación, notas e introducción por Emeterio S. Santovenia* (Havana, 1934), p. 77.

37. E.g. affidavits of Eduardo González del Real, Chief of the Navy General Staff, Dr. Octavio Ortiz Casanova, et al. (Photostatic copies in the possession of the Foreign Policy Association.) But none of these affidavits established direct connection between the officers and the Ambassador. Moreover, other officers denied that Mr. Welles ever entered into discussion with any members of their group. Cf. Tomás R. Yanes, "Los sucesos del Hotel Nacional," *Carteles* (Havana), December 17, 1933, and Torres Menier, "Mi Diario, La toma del Hotel Nacional," *Bohemia*, March 4, 1934. The Ambassador did not leave the hotel until September 12, when a strike of the employees left the hostelry without service. On the previous day he issued a statement declaring: "I have never spoken to any of the army officers either individually or in assembly nor have I ever attempted to communicate with them . . ." State Department, *Press Releases*, September 16, 1933, pp. 152, 153.

38. This minority group had resulted from an early split in the ABC.

39. For the final manifestoes of the Directorate, cf. *Diario de la Marina*, November 6 and 7, 1933.

40. Student opposition had been intensified by the killing of 19-year-old Mario Cadenas, allegedly by army agents. Cf. *Bohemia*, December 24, 1933.

41. Rubén de León, "Grau, Sus Leyes y la Oposición," *Bohemia*, February 11, 1934, p. 11. In January it was reported that the army was ousting interior mayors and replacing them with military men.

ister of Labor to achieve peaceful solutions for sugar mill strikes were balked by the arrest of strike leaders on the part of the military and violent actions against the workers. Grau supporters believed Batista, now supported by the conservatives, ready to sacrifice the President, if that were necessary, to win recognition.

By the middle of December public opinion in Havana had become almost unanimously hostile to the Grau-Batista régime.⁴² To cap the hostility of Welles and Washington, the opposition of the Spanish colony, the enmity on one hand of industrial and commercial leaders and on the other of Communist-led labor, and finally the loss of student support, the government was faced by divisions within the cabinet. Opposed to a left-wing faction, in which Dr. Antonio Guiteras, Minister of Interior, represented the most important figure, was a group of more conservative tendencies. It was reported on December 22 that four of these Ministers had presented their resignations.⁴³

THE HEVIA INTERREGNUM

On the afternoon of January 14, 1934 a conference was held by Grau, Batista and Mendieta. The President was informed by Batista, according to reports, that unless he resigned United States intervention was probable. Grau replied that for some time his resignation had been in the hands of the Revolutionary Junta, and that he was willing to withdraw if a successor could be found who would merit the confidence of all factions. Batista declared that Mendieta was such a candidate and Grau, realizing that the proposed candidate had probably been assured both army and United States support, congratulated Mendieta and left the meeting. At a cabinet session that evening Grau authorized two members of the cabinet to present his resignation to the Revolutionary Junta of Camp Columbia, which had been called into session.

The meeting of the Junta, over which Batista presided, was long and stormy. The attempt to secure approval for the election of Mendieta met with strong opposition. He was attacked as the representative of reaction and of the old politicians. As a compromise, certain leaders—including Batista and Sergio Carbó—accepted Carlos Hevia, Secretary of Agriculture in the Grau cabinet. Mendieta was then consulted and signed a statement pledg-

ing his support to Hevia. The latter, however, refused to accept office in the absence of definite action by the Revolutionary Junta. To meet this situation, Dr. Grau assembled in the Palace members of the Junta, together with his cabinet, who finally took action in designating Hevia as Grau's successor.

President Grau left the Palace on the afternoon of January 15, at which time Hevia became President *de facto*, although he did not take the oath of office until noon of the next day. The new régime, however, was denied effective support and Hevia presented his resignation to the Revolutionary Junta, sending it early on January 18 to Batista as the presiding officer of that body.⁴⁴

THE MENDIETA GOVERNMENT

At a meeting on January 18, 1934 leaders of the most important anti-Grau factions voted united support of Colonel Carlos Mendieta as Provisional President, and the new executive took the oath of office that afternoon. His accession represented the victory of Cuban conservatives, Colonel Batista, and Washington over the nationalist, left-wing and pro-labor forces which had been prominent during the Grau régime. His inauguration, attended by widespread rejoicing, was hailed as presaging the end of the political turmoil which had so long gripped the island. In the new cabinet, or "government of concentration," the *Unión Nacionalista* received the greater number of posts, but portfolios were also held by the ABC, the *Menocalistas* and the *Marianistas*.

The new administration proved itself speedily able to satisfy Washington's definition of a stable and representative régime. Following a conference at the White House with the diplomats representing the Latin American countries, President Roosevelt on January 23 announced recognition of the Mendieta government. This support was extended within five days of Mendieta's accession to power, in contrast to the 4-month refusal to recognize the Grau government. Moreover, Secretary Hull proclaimed the withdrawal of 10 of the 16 United States naval vessels then in Cuban waters.⁴⁵

44. On the above events, cf. the following articles in *Bohemia*: "El último día del presidente Grau en Palacio," January 21, 1934; Rubén de León, "El Cuartelazo del 15 de enero: La renuncia de Grau," March 18, 1934; Sergio Carbó, "Cómo y por culpa de quién cayó Grau San Martín," March 25, 1934; "De Rubén León a Sergio Carbó," April 1, 1934; Carlos Hevia, "Una aclaración," January 28, 1934; *ibid.*, "Mis Cuarenta y Ocho Horas de gobierno," August 26, 1934.

45. The last vessel was not withdrawn until September 1934, after the signing of the reciprocity agreement between Cuba and the United States.

42. Some observers, however, declare that Grau still held widespread support among the masses as a result of his labor legislation.

43. They were Ramiro Capablanca, Secretary of the Presidency; Costales Latatú, Secretary of Public Instruction; Domingo Tamargo, Secretary of Justice; and Gustavo Moreno, Secretary of Public Works. *New York Times*, December 23, 1933.

Immediate action was demanded from the new government in the economic field to assure the success of the sugar grinding season, which had been scheduled to begin on January 15. In the political field, its principal task was restoration of a sufficient degree of political tranquillity to permit the holding of elections for re-establishment of constitutional government. United States assistance was considered indispensable for the attainment of both economic and political goals. President Mendieta announced that he was counting on Washington's cooperation in abrogating the Platt Amendment and securing a "reasonable" sugar quota, a new reciprocity agreement, reorganization of the external debt, and American "monetary assistance."⁴⁶

On February 3, 1934 the government promulgated a Constitutional Law which superseded the Constitutional Statutes of the Grau régime and revoked both the 1901 constitution and the Machado amendments of 1928. Authority was concentrated in the person of the Provisional President. The cabinet, appointed by him, was accorded powers to legislate by decree-laws; Cuba had been without a congress since the fall of Machado. The President also was to name an advisory Council of State. Elections were to be held before December 31, 1934 to choose delegates to a constitutional convention. To check the revolutionary drive for reprisals against former Machado supporters, the new document prohibited confiscation of property and suspended the death penalty until the constitutional convention could reach a definite decision on capital punishment.⁴⁷

PROBLEM OF RESTORING POLITICAL STABILITY

The Mendieta government faced a turbulent situation. Labor unrest—so prominent throughout the whole revolution—challenged the régime from the moment of its accession to power. During the first three months of 1934 the island was the scene of approximately a hundred strikes, large and small. Reports of discontent in the sugar mills were numerous, labor unions charging that the army was forcing men back to work despite the failure of mill managements to meet their demands. Only 30 of the 178 mills assigned quotas had begun grinding by February 12. The decisive test for the government came early in March with a general strike involving 200,000.⁴⁸ The movement was directed by the National Confederation of Labor, and

had as its object not only repeal of repressive labor legislation, but also overthrow of the government itself. The authorities, however, threw the full weight of the army against the labor offensive. Hundreds of labor leaders were imprisoned, many unions dissolved, and after 10 days of struggle the backbone of the movement was broken.

In addition to the use of the military in throttling labor unrest, the government promulgated various decrees—drawn in large part by ABC leaders—which attempted to "coordinate" under government authority all interests concerned in industrial struggles.⁴⁹ These prohibited the right to strike until after a compulsory waiting period, limited the exercise of sympathetic strikes, and outlined an elaborate system of governmental machinery for conciliation of disputes. Transgressors of the decrees were declared common criminals. Unions violating the legislation were threatened with dissolution and cancellation of all agreements with employers.⁵⁰ On March 2 Dr. Juan Antiga, Mendieta's Secretary of Labor, resigned, charging that his efforts to secure measures providing "justice and respect for the Cuban workers" had been thwarted by the unwillingness of his cabinet colleagues to attack vested interests.⁵¹

The prevalence of terrorism, including almost daily bomb explosions in the capital and interior cities, constituted another serious challenge to the government. The political use of this weapon had been introduced into Cuba by the students and the ABC in their struggle against the Machado dictatorship. Subsequently the same tactics had been employed by the ABC in its campaign of opposition to the Grau régime. They were now turned against the ABC and other groups supporting the Mendieta government. In part these constant bombings represented the activities of Opposition political groups, and in part were the work of criminal gangsters intent on extorting sums for "protection" from business and commerce.

Explosions damaged the homes of various cabinet members and the terrorist campaign included attacks on the United States Ambassador and President Mendieta. On June 17 a parade of thousands of ABC members in Havana was fired upon from various points along the line of march. Fourteen were killed, including three women marchers, and

49. *Diario de la Marina*, February 18, 1934.

50. *Gaceta*, February 6, 1934, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 12, Decree-Law No. 3; March 6, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 22, Decree-Laws No. 51, 52; March 9, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 28, Decree-Law No. 63. For an analysis of the provisions and effects of this legislation, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, pp. 202-08.

51. *Diario de la Marina*, March 3, 1934.

46. *New York Times*, January 26, 1934.

47. For text of the Constitutional Law, cf. *Gaceta*, February 8, 1934, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 10.

48. "Cuba Battles Labor Unrest," *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, March 16, 1934.

more than 50 wounded. Following the massacre, the ABC on June 25 withdrew its four representatives from the cabinet, accusing the government of incapacity to maintain order and failure to carry through a reconstruction program.⁵²

In addition to labor unrest and terrorist agitation, student discontent constituted a third obstacle to the restoration of political stability. On January 14, the day before the fall of the Grau régime, the National University had been formally reopened after three years' suspension of classes. The students viewed the accession of the Mendieta government with hostility. They resented its failure to include autonomy for the University in the new Constitutional Law and went on strike until the government capitulated on this point, restoring to the University the 2 per cent of total national revenues originally granted by the Grau government. During the spring clashes between troops and students resulted in various casualties. In June the National University was again in turmoil as student assemblies considered charges against 45 professors accused of truckling to the Machado dictatorship. Following days of feverish agitation the whole University faculty resigned in a body on June 29, 1934.⁵³

Within the cabinet patronage had proved a serious bone of contention; meetings ran to interminable lengths while representatives of rival factions discussed plans for distributing municipal appointments—important in relation to the conduct of the coming elections. But more fundamental was the conflict in policy between representatives of the old parties—Mendieta's Nationalists and Menocal's Conservatives—who argued that the provisional government should do nothing substantial except prepare for the elections, and the ABC which demanded immediate action on a reform program. On the initiative of Dr. Joaquín Martínez Saenz, ABC chief and Secretary of the Treasury, the Mendieta government approved certain financial decrees, lowering the content of the gold peso to accord with the reduction in the gold value of the United States dollar and prohibiting the export of money from the island except for certain specified purposes.⁵⁴ These measures served to alienate the support which business interests had formerly given the ABC. At the same time the rank and file of

the society continued restive at the do-nothing policy of the régime.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the *auténtico* followers of Dr. Grau had organized the Cuban Revolutionary party, which was credited with extensive support in the provinces. This party subsequently lost some of its more aggressive and radical spirits to "Young Cuba," led by Dr. Antonio Guiteras—who favored armed revolution.

The summer and fall of 1934 were marked by persisting unrest. Terrorism and strikes continued, with almost daily bombings in the capital. The government arrested *auténtico* leaders and former army officers; the headquarters of labor unions were raided. Editors critical of the administration were kidnapped and forced to drink large doses of castor oil;⁵⁶ the victims blamed army men for these attacks.

Despite political difficulties, economic events were showing a favorable trend. Little of this improvement, however, could be directly traced to acts of the Cuban government; its effective economic policies had been limited to suspension of service on the foreign debt and expansion of the currency. On April 10, 1934 it had stopped amortization payments on the external funded debt⁵⁷ until the time when total annual government revenues should exceed the sum of \$60,000,000. A week later, by Decree-Laws No. 140 and 141, it appointed a commission to study the question of the Chase public works loans contracted by Machado. This commission rendered its report on June 18 declaring, as concerned the Chase National Bank, that the right of repudiation was incontrovertible; concerning the holders of the bonds, it stated that "from a legal standpoint the government has good reason also to decide for repudiation," but on ethical grounds advised the authorities to arrange some settlement with those who had bought bonds in

55. For manifestoes setting forth the position of the ABC during this period, cf. *Diario de la Marina*, February 2 and 21, and *El País*, March 22, 1934; also Jorge Mañach, "El ABC y la crisis del gabinete," *Bohemia*, July 1, 1934. While in the government, the ABC had supported reorganization of the judiciary and the Department of Education. Under Dr. Jorge Mañach the budget of the education ministry had been raised to the highest level in the history of the Republic.

56. Among those suffering this treatment were Miguel A. Quevedo, editor of *Bohemia*, eight members of the staff of the ABC daily, *Acción*, and Dr. Carlos Garrido, editor of *La Voz*. The latter died following the attack. Guillermo Martínez Márquez, editor of *Ahora*, was arrested.

57. The Morgan and Speyer loans. For a discussion of Cuba's public debt, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, chapter XVI. The action of the Mendieta government was taken by Decree-Law No. 123. Resumption of payments was authorized in the 1935-1936 budget.

52. Cf. *Memorandum al Presidente Mendieta sobre la situación del Gobierno Provisional y la necesidad de adoptar un plan de reconstrucción nacional*, March 5, 1934.

53. For a more detailed account of the student movement, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, pp. 129, 150-52; and Raúl Roa, *Bufa Subversiva* (Havana, Cultural, 1935).

54. Decree No. 244 of May 22, 1934, as amended by Decrees No. 256 and 259 of May 25 and 28 respectively; and Decree-Law No. 268 of June 2, 1934.

good faith.⁵⁸ On March 22, 1934 the government authorized the coinage of \$10,000,000 in silver pesos, which subsequently were made legal tender in unlimited amounts for taxes, duties and other payments to the government.⁵⁹ Credits for the coining of two subsequent orders of 10,000,000 silver pesos were extended—in January 1935 for \$5,000,000, and on October 18, 1935 for \$6,000,000.⁶⁰

UNITED STATES COOPERATION

Economic improvement was principally due to the policy of active cooperation which Washington had adopted toward the Mendieta régime. Among a number of measures,⁶¹ the most important were the Jones-Costigan Act of May 9, 1934 and the new trade agreement of August 24, 1934. In accordance with the Jones-Costigan law, Cuba was assigned an annual quota of 1,902,000 short tons of sugar in the United States market. At the same time President Roosevelt, by the use of his tariff reduction powers, lowered the duty on Cuban sugar from 2 to 1½ cents a pound. The Act gave Cuba a quota less than half the average total of its exports to the United States during the period 1924-1929. But by guaranteeing the island a definite place in the market of its principal customer it assured to the Cuban sugar industry a certain period of stability and served to raise the price of sugar.⁶²

The new Cuban-American trade agreement revised the reciprocity treaty which had been in force since 1902. The United States further reduced the duty on Cuban sugar from 1½ to 0.9 of a cent per pound, and also lowered tariff duties on Cuban rum, tobacco, and fresh fruits and vegetables. In return, Cuba reduced its tariff rates on a large array of United States exports, making particularly important concessions on hog lard and allied prod-

ucts, wheat flour, passenger automobiles, cigarettes and other items.⁶³

In addition to this program of economic cooperation, which had provided particular stimulus to sugar, Washington granted also a large measure of moral and political support. On March 29, 1934, shortly after the Cuban government had been seriously challenged by the general strike movement, Assistant-Secretary of State Welles paid public tribute to President Mendieta's "qualities of leadership, integrity and unselfish patriotism," and to the "conspicuously able leaders of all political factions" who composed his cabinet.⁶⁴ Three months later, when the régime had been weakened by the ABC resignations and the aggressive threat of the terrorist campaign, its position was fortified by an embargo which President Roosevelt imposed on all shipments of arms from the United States.⁶⁵ The government's opponents were thus deprived of supplies.

The most important political step, however, was abrogation of the Platt Amendment, carried out by an agreement signed on May 29, 1934, which superseded the Permanent Treaty of 1903. In the new accord the United States surrendered its right of intervention in Cuba, together with certain privileges of fiscal and sanitary supervision. The lease of the naval base at Guantánamo held by the United States, however, was continued "until the two contracting parties agree to the modification or abrogation of the stipulations" of the agreement thereon.⁶⁶ Although the abrogation of the Platt Amendment removed an outstanding cause of anti-American criticism, not only in Cuba but throughout Latin America, island public opinion—outside official circles—displayed only lukewarm enthusiasm. While the government sought to capitalize this achievement, the Cuban Revolutionary party asserted that the Amendment had been a dead letter since the Cuban delegation attacked it at Montevideo.⁶⁷

58. Secretaría de Hacienda, *Los Empréstitos de Obras Públicas, Informe oficial rendido por la comisión especial de investigación* . . . (Havana, 1935). In August 1935 a commission headed by Senators Gerald P. Nye and Burton K. Wheeler and representing the Public Works Bondholders' Committee requested from President Mendieta resumption of interest payments on the bonds. The President, however, declared that his administration had decided to refrain from all action "until the new Government elected by the free will of the people of Cuba is constituted." *Diario de la Marina*, August 30, 1935.

59. Decree No. 93 of March 22, 1934, and Decree No. 153 of April 24, 1934.

60. *New York Herald Tribune*, October 19, 1935. The rise in the value of bar silver made coinage operations successively more costly.

61. For a review of these, cf. David H. Popper, "Latin American Policy of the Roosevelt Administration," *Foreign Policy Reports*, December 19, 1934.

62. For a more detailed discussion of the Jones-Costigan Act, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, pp. 258-63. The Act expires on January 1, 1938.

63. For the text of the treaty, cf. Executive Agreement Series, No. 67, *Reciprocal Trade Agreement between the United States of America and Cuba* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1934). Its terms are discussed in some detail in *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, pp. 61-67.

64. Sumner Welles, *Relations between the United States and Cuba*, State Department, Latin American Series, No. 7 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1934).

65. *Press Releases*, June 30, 1934. Under this embargo all shipments required licenses from the State Department and the approval of the Cuban government.

66. For text of the treaty, cf. U. S. Department of State, *Treaty Information*, Bulletin No. 56, May 31, 1934 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1934).

67. Cf. Herminio Portell Vilá, *Cuba y la Conferencia de Montevideo* (Havana, 1934).

CUBA'S DEPENDENCE ON AMERICAN TARIFF

The price of sugar, Cuba's principal export, responded quickly to the tariff reductions conceded in connection with the Jones-Costigan Act and the new reciprocity agreement. During May 1934 the average price on the New York market had been 0.78 cents per pound,⁶⁸ but it more than doubled during the summer and for September the average price was 1.98. The rise continued in subsequent months and in October 1935 the figure stood at 2.72. In contrast, the "world" price on the London market, where Cuba in 1934 disposed of 32.6 per cent of its supply as compared with 60.2 in the United States, averaged 1.05 cents per pound in May 1934,⁶⁹ declined during later months and had recovered only to 1.05 cents by October 1935.

Trade with the United States was markedly stimulated. For the first year after the reciprocity agreement went into effect the figures, compared with the previous year, were as follows:⁷⁰

CUBAN TRADE

	In thousands: 12 months ended August 31		Per Cent Increase
	1934	1935	1934-1935
Cuban Exports to U. S.			
Cane Sugar	\$26,988	\$120,762	347.5
Other commodities in agreement	10,486	12,359	17.9
Total commodities in agreement	37,474	133,121	255.2
Other dutiable goods	5,175	10,701	106.8
Free goods	5,529	7,144	29.2
Total	\$48,178	\$150,966	213.3
Imports from U. S.	\$35,448	\$56,304	58.8

The favorable economic trend was reflected in government income. As compared with regular budget appropriations of \$41,916,000 for 1933-1934 and \$55,395,000 for 1934-1935,⁷¹ those for 1935-1936 were fixed at \$65,125,000.

During the period in question the increase in

68. C. & F. basis. Data from Lamborn and Company, New York.

69. Converted to C. & F. basis New York.

70. U. S. Treasury Department, *Press Service No. 6-14*, October 31, 1935. At first glance these statistics would seem to indicate that Cuba's trade balance had gained decidedly as a result of the agreement, since exports to the United States had increased 213.3 per cent, while imports had grown only 58.8 per cent. This conclusion, however, must be qualified by recognition of abnormal conditions during the two years compared. In the second twelve-month period—that ending August 31, 1935—approximately 80 per cent of the 1934 sugar quota and 100 per cent of the 1935 quota cleared customs. If sugar is deducted from all commodities, the increase in Cuban exports was 42.5 per cent.

imports of consumption goods—particularly lard, wheat flour and potatoes—suggests an improvement in living standards. Wage levels also showed some tendency to rise. A standard of one peso for an 8-hour day was established in Havana and of 80 cents in other parts of the island. Law No. 40 of March 22, 1935⁷² granted workers the right to a 14-day vacation with pay. Other legislation provided maternity insurance and regulated the work of women and minors. Provincial labor exchanges were authorized.⁷³ Testimony conflicts concerning the extent to which these laws are enforced.

THE GENERAL STRIKE OF MARCH 1935

Economic improvement, however, failed to bring political peace. The return of relative prosperity had served, in part at least, to strengthen political and economic reaction. Many Cubans viewed the government as in large part a military dictatorship. Through Ambassador Caffery, United States influence was again believed to be shaping Cuban politics. This situation had created a widespread sentiment of frustration. Nothing had been done to initiate agrarian reform or to lessen the dominant control of foreign capital in the economic life of the island.

In March 1935 this discontent came to a head in a general strike movement more widely supported than that which had contributed to the overthrow of General Machado in August 1933. Estimates placed the total number of strikers at 400,000 to 500,000. The movement, which throughout was substantially one of passive resistance, began on February 12 with a walk-out of teachers and students. This promptly led to the closing of every school on the island from the kindergarten to the University.⁷⁴ The demands were listed under five heads: abolition of army rule, restoration of democratic principles in government, release of political

71. Subsequent "extraordinary" credits voted in each of these two fiscal years increased government expenditures to \$53,074,000 for 1933-1934 and to \$69,773,000 for 1934-1935. Additional credits voted during the first four months of the 1935-1936 fiscal year totalled \$4,886,000. Critics charged the government with extravagance and with disorderly financial administration.

72. *Gaceta*, March 25, 1935.

73. For a list of Cuban social legislation from 1899 to September 1935, cf. *Índice Cronológico de la Legislación Social Cubana* (Comentarios por José Enrique de Sandoval, Havana, Rambla Bouza, 1935). "The Labor Laws of Cuba" (U. S. Department of Commerce, General Legal Bulletin, October 24, 1935) summarizes the most important recent legislation.

74. On February 18 the University students joined the strike. Their strike committee served to maintain a limited liaison among the different groups. For an account of the movement by a student leader, cf. Aureliano Sánchez Arango, "The Recent General Strike in Cuba," *Three Americas* (New York), June 1935.

prisoners, suppression of summary courts (*Tri-bunales de Urgencia*) and increased expenditures for education. Due largely to the activities of the ABC and *auténtico* leaders, employees in the government departments were drawn into the movement early in March, their exodus affecting all but two of the ministries. Organized labor was the last important group to give its backing, and only after some hesitation agreed to call a general strike for Monday, March 11. Dissension in its ranks prevented complete unity in the labor offensive. But on the date set a state of virtual anarchy reigned in Havana.

Despite this apparent success, the tide had already turned against the strikers. Lack of unified purpose and leadership fatally handicapped the movement. At the urging of Colonel Batista, the government adopted an aggressive policy. The Constitutional Law was suspended.⁷⁵ By decrees issued on March 9 and 11 the Mendieta régime declared successively a state of siege and a state of war, thus establishing army rule throughout the island. All civil rights were suspended; public gatherings of more than three persons were prohibited. Hundreds of Opposition representatives were jailed, and other hundreds were later driven into exile. Scores were wounded and 11 were reported killed in Havana, some under the cowardly *ley de fuga* ("shot while attempting to escape").

In its efforts to crush the movement, the government declared all participating labor unions dissolved; union headquarters were raided. The death penalty was restored and prescribed for those sabotaging food, light, power and water services. These measures, the most extreme in the history of the Republic, were finally successful, and on March 12 the workers began to return to their jobs. When they did so, however, hundreds were arrested and jailed.

Following the strike the military consolidated their control of the situation. Army governors ruled all the provinces and military supervisors were placed over each district.⁷⁶ Government offices and the primary schools—the only educational institutions left open—were thoroughly "purged" of strike sympathizers, who in many cases were replaced by friends or relatives of army members. All Opposition newspapers were forced to suspend publication. The victory of the government was hailed by conservative interests as having saved the island from chaos and assured future order and progress.

75. *Gaceta*, March 8, 1935, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 14.

76. For a description of excesses by the military in a village outside of Havana, cf. article by Carleton Beals of March 25, 1935, released by North American Newspaper Alliance.

On May 8 the régime eliminated its most dangerous enemy when Dr. Antonio Guiteras was killed near Matanzas as he sought to escape from the island. Dr. Guiteras, leader of Young Cuba and an active opponent of Colonel Batista, had been in hiding for several months, accused not only of plotting revolt but also of complicity in the kidnapping of Eutimio Falla Bonet, a member of a prominent pro-Machado family, for whose release the record sum of \$300,000 was paid. During previous months military firing squads, for the first time in the history of the Cuban Republic, had executed two civilians—Jaime Greistein and José Castiello. Both were accused of terrorism.

THE "BATISTA DICTATORSHIP"

The government's victory over the general strike further enhanced the influence of the military at the expense of the civil administration. As the Mendieta cabinet progressively lost popular support, its political base was correspondingly narrowed. It had been reduced by the successive withdrawal of the ABC, the Menocal Conservatives,⁷⁷ and Miguel Mariano Gómez, head of Republican Action, to representatives of the *Unión Nacionalista* alone. From this remnant there were nine resignations during the strike.

Since January 1934 Colonel Batista had succeeded in greatly strengthening the internal organization and consolidating the power and position of the army. On February 8 the control of the military by Batista and other sergeants as against former commissioned officers was legalized by Decree No. 408 which changed the status of the army from that of a "revolutionary" force to a "constitutional army for the defense of the nation."⁷⁸ Of a total budget of \$55,395,000 for 1934-1935, the army and navy were allotted \$12,201,000, or 22 per cent. Subsequent credits approved by the cabinet increased this total by \$5,000,000.⁷⁹ For 1935-1936 the armed forces were assigned \$14,536,000, or 22.3 per cent of a total budget of \$65,250,000. In addition the National Police of Havana were granted \$1,940,000 from the revenues of the central government. During the Machado régime, however, the revenue absorbed by the army and navy had ranged as low as 14 per cent for some years and for the final period of depression and terrorism had not exceed-

77. The Conservative Secretaries of Health and Public Works, Santiago Verdeja and Daniel Compte, had been subject to temporary arrest by the military while attending a meeting in the house of General Menocal, accused of violating the law prohibiting public gatherings. *New York Herald Tribune*, June 3, 1934.

78. *Gaceta*, February 9, 1934.

79. *New York Times*, June 29, 1935.

ed 19 per cent.⁸⁰ In contrast to the large sums absorbed by the military under the Mendieta régime, governmental branches such as agriculture and public works—of primary importance to Cuba as an agricultural country—received \$1,209,000 and \$2,032,000 respectively in the 1935-1936 budget.

With augmented financial support went an increase in personnel of approximately 8,000 men, resulting in a total force almost twice that under Machado. The 1935-1936 budget provided for 15,500 men in the army and 2,850 in the navy, or a joint force of 18,350. To this should be added 3,750 in the National Police, making a total of 22,100 men in the armed forces under the control of Colonel Batista. A military reserve had also been created, formed of the police, firemen, former army men and other civilians. The army leader expressed the desire to incorporate all government employees into this reserve. He also organized a uniformed women's reserve, 5,000 strong.⁸¹

The pay of the soldiers was bettered by increases of from 15 to 25 per cent.⁸² They were fed and housed more adequately than ever before. New barracks and army posts were built. The morale of the enlisted men was further improved by the abolition of various distinctions between officers and men, and by the grant of a definite clothing allowance. Large quantities of arms and ammunition were purchased, as well as new bombing and hydro-airplanes. American instructors were hired to train a new air corps.

Colonel Batista declared: "This army has no desire to enter politics, but we have been forced to take a hand in the affairs of the nation The army is always subordinate to civil power, but where the latter proves itself too weak to cope with the situation, then military authority must step in."⁸³

PROSPECTS FOR ELECTIONS

Despite widespread skepticism concerning the significance of the projected general elections, the government persisted in preparations for that event. This was in part due to pressure from Ambassador

Caffery and from Washington. According to Cuban leaders, Mr. Caffery in the spring of 1935 actively urged prominent figures in the old parties to support the Mendieta government and the coming poll. Successful elections in the island were important to Washington if the Roosevelt administration were to justify its Cuban policy in the 1936 political campaign. Unless a constitutional government in Cuba replaced the essentially military rule of Batista and Mendieta, it would appear that the United States had employed its influence to overthrow one dictatorship—that of Machado—only to have it succeeded by another.

A new Constitutional Law was formally decreed on June 12, 1935,⁸⁴ which provided that the coming elections, instead of serving to name delegates to a constituent assembly, were to be general in character—for President, Vice President and other offices. Constitutional reform was to be postponed until a draft prepared by the new Congress had been subsequently ratified by a special constituent assembly.

Despite public apathy, political activities became intense as December 15, 1935—the date set for the elections—approached. The National Democratic party nominated as its Presidential candidate General Mario Menocal. The Nationalists, Republicans and Liberals were reported to be in a series of negotiations on various proposals for fusion. The first two parties finally gave a joint nomination to Miguel Mariano Gómez, while the national assembly of the Liberals named Carlos Manuel de la Cruz. Subsequently, however, five provincial assemblies of this party chose as their Presidential electors the list nominated by the Gómez parties, thus throwing their support to Gómez.⁸⁵ When the Supreme Electoral Tribunal refused to sanction this move, the Gómez coalition threatened to withdraw from the contest. This move, if carried out, would have nullified the significance of the poll. As an escape from the impasse, the government postponed the date of elections and invited Dr. Harold W. Dodds, president of Princeton University, to serve as adviser. His suggested solution gave the Presidential electors named by the three parties⁸⁶ the right to decide which candidate—Gómez or de la Cruz—they would support. But General Menocal, believing such a plan would eventually redound to the advantage of Gómez, his leading rival,^{86a} an-

80. For the 1934-1935 and 1935-1936 budget figures, cf. *Gaceta*, June 30, 1934, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 60, and June 29, 1935, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 117. For the years 1929-1933 of the Machado period, cf. *Problems of the New Cuba*, cited, pp. 370-71.

81. *Gaceta*, November 13, 1934, Decree-Law No. 671, and December 12, 1934, Decree No. 3153; *Diario de la Marina*, March 24, 1935; J. D. Phillips, "Batista Talks of the Future of Cuba," *New York Times Magazine*, April 14, 1935; and *New York Times*, September 15, 1935.

82. *Gaceta*, March 14, 1935, Decree No. 468.

83. J. D. Phillips, "Batista Links His Destiny with Cuba's," *New York Times Magazine*, October 14, 1934.

84. *Gaceta*, June 12, 1935, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 93.

85. It was reported that Colonel Batista had originally backed de la Cruz, but later shifted to Gómez.

86. Nationalists, Republicans and Liberals.

86a. On December 18, 1935 the Liberal electors voted to back Gómez.

nounced that the Democratic party would not go to the polls unless President Mendieta withdrew in favor of a more impartial successor. The President finally bowed to this demand and presented his resignation on December 11, 1935.⁸⁷ He was succeeded by Secretary of State Barnett, who proceeded with plans for a poll on January 10, 1936, in which Menocal agreed to participate. The campaign has thus come to be substantially a contest between the two old parties—Conservatives and Liberals—while the groups which sought a New Deal are outlawed. Their leaders have lost faith in democratic processes and plan armed revolution.

CONCLUSION

The fall of Machado initiated two revolutions in Cuba—one political, the other social. The first sought to supplant dictatorship and return to constitutional democracy. The second envisaged such social reconstruction as would restore control of land and economic life to the Cuban people. To date both revolutions have failed of their objectives. The Machado régime has been eliminated, but behind the present administration looms the Batista dictatorship, less “constitutional” and more military than its predecessor. Although some degree of prosperity has returned to the island, economic recovery has not brought political tranquillity. Unrest is still widespread and revolutionary groups constantly plot armed insurrection. As in 1933, the University and secondary schools are closed to Cuban youth.

Defeat has also attended plans for social reconstruction. Attempts at reform under Grau were succeeded by reaction under Mendieta. Some excellent labor legislation found a place on the statute books, but workers’ organizations were shorn of effective power. The return of prosperity strengthened conservative interests, and thus helped to block projected change. Moreover, left-wing groups lacked cohesion, discipline and a common working program. The labor movement, largely under Communist direction, fought those political factions—the ABC, the *auténticos* and Young Cuba—which were pledged to economic and social change. These parties, in turn, not only waged war on each other, but were torn by internal differences arising from

personal ambition, doctrinaire attitudes and other factors.

During the period under discussion, the United States played a peculiarly decisive rôle in Cuban affairs. The Roosevelt administration sought to remedy the island’s economic malaise by a program of active cooperation. Whatever prosperity Cuba today enjoys is largely the result of United States policy on sugar and trade. The very success of this program, however, reveals the degree to which Cuban independence is limited by the American tariff.

The Washington government won praise by its refusal to exercise open political control in Cuba. It rejected insistent demands for the landing of marines. The Platt Amendment, with its right of intervention, was abrogated. Such evidences of self-restraint did not mean, however, that the United States had ceased to exert marked influence over Cuban developments. In addition to the economic policies already mentioned, recognition proved a powerful instrument in the hands of the Roosevelt administration. It was extended promptly to Céspedes and Mendieta, but denied to Grau. Refusal to recognize this latter régime helped to doom, as it now appears, the most promising opportunity for a constructive solution of the Cuban problem. Less patent, but not less important, than recognition was diplomatic pressure. This proved an essential factor in Machado’s fall; it seriously weakened Grau and correspondingly strengthened Mendieta; it contributed to the ascendancy of Batista. But with all the undeniable power of this weapon, its limitations are worthy of note. Mr. Welles failed under Céspedes in his endeavor to keep the revolution within constitutional channels; he failed under Mendieta to assure island stability through a “representative,” middle-of-the-road coalition. Similarly, prospects that Mr. Caffery’s insistence on elections will remedy Cuban unrest are not, at this writing, particularly hopeful.

If the fundamental purpose of the Welles-Caffery policy was to avoid prolonged civil warfare and danger to American enterprises, it may claim some success. The forces of protest have been driven underground—but whether to disappear or to reappear in more aggressive form, the future alone will decide.

87. For the electoral law, cf. *Gaceta*, July 2, 1935, *Edición Extraordinaria* No. 120. The decision of the Supreme Electoral

Tribunal is given in *Diario de la Marina*, November 20, 1935. For Dodds’ decision, cf. *New York Times*, December 7, 1935.